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**Psychology of subculture: Phenomenology and Contemporary
Tendencies of Development**

**PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF PRESCHOOLERS IN SITUATIONS
OF INTERACTION**

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Abstract

Preschoolers show an active desire to interact with their peers in different types and forms of activities. The similar desire to communicate and interact helps to create a children's community in which preschoolers learn how to coordinate their actions, understand each other, and help those who need help. In different situations of interaction, they develop communicative skills, and, if conflicts occur, try to resolve them creating premises for the formation of the prosocial behavior. In this case, the prosocial behavior should be understood as helping behavior, which is aimed at helping another person, at manifesting initiative and activity with the purpose of gaining profits or certain benefits for another child. But at the same time, this behavior does not provide for reciprocal help or benefit for yourself. In preschool age, the prosocial behavior in situations of children's interaction plays a significant role in the development of positive friendships and interactions as well as the formation of a positive experience of interaction with others. The article presents the results of observation of children of senior preschool age aiming to identify features of the development of the prosocial behavior in situations of interactions. The study involved 120 children from three to seven years old who attended pre-school educational institutions. The prosocial behavior was considered as the ability of preschoolers to focus on a partner of interaction, to provide him with help and support, which, in conflict situations, allows older children act in favor of another child against their will.

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Keywords: Prosocial behavior, preschool age, preschooler interaction, focus on a partner of interaction, emotional decentralization, empathy.



1. Introduction

Recently, the study of the features of preschoolers' interaction is becoming more and more relevant. The interest in this problem is based on the fact that the implementation of modern requirements of personality-oriented approach to educational work can't ignore the peculiarities of a child's interaction in various situations with peers.

The children's interaction in many ways resembles their contact with an adult. But there is also a specific content of interaction with a peer. It is distinguished by a particularly relaxed, free nature of the actions of children and bright emotional colouring (Lisina, 1997). In different forms of interaction with peers, a preschooler can imitate and copy not only those forms that are useful and necessary for their peers. Some situations provide an opportunity to imitate models of behavior that are harmful and have a negative impact on the child's development. However, the positive or negative experience of interaction in the children's team, the development of interpersonal and communication skills and the development of behavioral skills determine the child's attitude to himself, his peers and adults as well as the world in the future (Mavrina, 1999).

Currently, among all existing forms of interaction between preschoolers, the close attention of researchers, psychologists, and educators is drawn to prosocial behavior. This behavior is expressed in a certain sympathy for a child's peers, desire, ability, and, last but not the least, the child's willingness to help a friend in a difficult situation, to share with him important things (sweets, a new toy or some other things important to the child), to step back or accept the conditions of the game led by his friend. The level of behavior's "prosociality" is usually considered as the main sign of the relationship (Neverova, 2015; Masalova, 2017).

Behavior that is aimed at the well-being of another person in the context of studying the characteristics of the interaction of preschool children is valuable and socially significant in its own way. Prosocial or so-called helping behavior is associated with the process of recognizing the state of another child as well as the ability to correlate your state with moral norms; it is also oriented towards the joint nature of this activity (Andreev, 2016). Selfless actions of a child towards other children committed for their behalf are clear indicators of prosocial behavior.

Most studies conducted in our country and abroad have shown that actions in favour of another person begin to develop at an early stage when children start to redirect their attention to situations when their peers are worried or frustrated. Early age can be described as a period when the child begins to master the first skills of interaction with children, tries to measure immediate desires and actions with the needs of those around him (Abramenkova, 2008). The experience of these first relationships is the foundation for the further development of the child's personality. It determines the characteristics of a person's self-consciousness, the attitude towards the world, behavior and well-being among other people (Smirnova & Kholmogorova, 2005).

At the same time, there is no single point of view among researchers on what psychological changes in the interaction with peers affect the development of the prosocial behavior of preschoolers (Yakobson, 2003) by noting that such children's traits such as emotional and cognitive decentration as well as random behavior allow them to act in favour of another child, help him and accept the playing conditions of a partner, mainly links the emergence of such behavior with the processes of mastering

norms (firstly – moral norms). Guschina (2015), however, links with understanding the mental states of another child without changing his state, empathy and sympathy for him, active support of another child and assistance. While the phenomenon of decentration should be considered as the cognitive ability to understand and take into account a completely different point of view. Abramenkova (2008) combines the term prosocial behavior with the term “humane relations”. Formed during communication and mutual activities, the willingness to feel, experience, and act as if this another child was the child himself is the psychological basis of the humane attitude toward another person.

2. Problem Statement

The problem of studying the so-called “prosociality”, prosocial behavior is considered as one of the main indicators of the successful interaction of preschoolers, based on mutual help and support of their peers. The skills formed in various forms of interaction of preschool children provide the child with an opportunity to evaluate himself and others more accurately, test his and others capabilities, contribute to the development of creative independence and social competence in the future (Mavrina, 1999).

The important role in the formation of prosocial behavioral skills in situations of interaction plays the orientation of the child’s attitude to others. The emergence of such emotions as sympathy for another and empathy is essential. And empathy depends drastically on the situation and position of the child. A strong and most significant source of the child’s experiences is his relationship with adults and peers (Kukhova & Skripacheva, 2018). Altruistic actions and prosocial behavior are indicated as a result of care (Kukhova, 2012). Peculiar forms of interaction aimed at helping another person, satisfying his needs, and relieving his sufferings require a focus on the state of this another child, his needs, joys and sorrows. On the basis of external practical interaction with others, the forms of which are cultivated and sanctioned by society, the child then develops an internal emotional attitude toward people. Furthermore, there is the genesis of empathic experiences that play an important role in the development of behavior’s prosocial motives (Zaporozhets, 1986).

The analysis of literature and modern research suggests that the common opinion is based on the fact that genetically the first forms of social behavior emerge during the interaction with peers in the form of reactions to their emotional states.

3. Research Questions

Prosocial behavior of preschool children is built on the basis of the developed ability to empathize and sympathy, which manifest in different life situations, including those that arise during communication with others. For effective interaction, it is extremely important for the child to understand the meaning of the norms and requirements as well as the corresponding emotional attitude toward them which is necessary to become criteria of his emotional evaluations of others and his actions. In these cases, the explanation and guidance from parents, mentors, and all adults who interact with preschoolers are not enough. The necessary explanations find their reinforcement in the personal practical experience of the child’s activities, the experience of interacting with their peers, helping others, or vice versa.

In these situations, they become the criteria of his emotional evaluations of other children and his actions. The essential role here plays participation in mutual, exciting and interesting activities with peers and adults, which allows the child to live meaningfully during this period and gain this experience by himself. In order to achieve certain goals in situations of interaction with others, children are given the opportunity to feel the need to comply with certain rules and regulations.

Criteria:

1. Development of opportunities for children to independently focus on another child
2. Development of opportunities for children to independently determine their desires and needs
3. Development of opportunities for children to determine their desires and needs to help them in case of interaction. The strategies of behavior such as assistance and support, the resolution of controversial moments in situations of interaction depended on children's understanding and developed focus on helping peers.

4. Purpose of the Study

Observation of the manifestation of prosocial behavior in situations of interaction of preschool children, which was understood as the ability to focus on a partner of interaction as well as assist and support him in situations arising during this process.

5. Research Methods

To identify such opportunities, we developed a scheme of natural observation of children in different situations.

Situation 1. An adult directly influenced the behavior of children during their difficulties and emerging conflicts by telling them how to behave correctly.

Situation 2. An adult tried not to interfere with the children's interaction. But at the same time children saw that they were watched.

Situation 3. Children didn't see an adult. The teacher was outside the zone of visibility and the children didn't know that he was watching and controlling them. The observation was carried out according to the following parameters:

- the presence / absence of an adequate (socially expected, approved) reaction to a peer who is having difficulty in performing a particular action;
- the presence / absence of an adequate response to a peer who claims to possess an object;
- the presence / absence of an adequate response to a peer who claims to dominate in interaction;
- the presence / absence of an adequate response to a peer who is offended by another child.

6. Findings

The observation made it possible to determine the number of children who assist and support their peers by themselves at the request of an adult or the demand of another child. They don't respond to requests and instructions from others. We found that children of younger preschool age are trying to get away from the independent resolution of conflict situations that arise during their interaction with peers.

They are trying to involve a teacher in the problem and participation in resolving a conflict situation (52%). By this, they showed their inability to display prosocial skills, despite requests from a peer to help. Children (16%) didn't have a desire to coordinate their actions. Moreover, they tried to make a physical impact on their peers (to take a toy and run away or even hit another child). We could see prosocial skills in younger preschoolers only when we had adults intervened in the situation (14%). Children who didn't receive toys or objects from others pushed and sometimes even destroyed the whole game. Some children didn't even try to solve the problem situation themselves. They immediately asked for help, complaining that they were "someone took their toy", "someone is interrupting them, etc."

Children of middle preschool age demonstrated their desire (32%) to help their peer. However, preschool children helped their peers only in cases when this request came from a teacher (20%). Furthermore, even though this request could be repeated several times, 14 % of children would help their peers very rarely. Preschoolers reacted emotionally to situations, made attempts to settle the situation by trying to negotiate with their friends about the distribution of certain roles in the game while avoiding the physical impact on their peers.

During the interaction, we observed an increase in the number of cases (48%) of assisting the peers in difficult situations. Moreover, girls (55%) come to help more often in a group with a productive activity. They demonstrated a sincere interest in the activities with another child in cases when something didn't work and the peer needed help to create a complex construction or needed a missing element, for example. At the same time, girls in situations of mutual help were emotionally more stable and more susceptible to the emotional state of their peers; they showed more complicity, kindness, gentleness, and sensitivity towards their peers. They tried to embrace and calm them down. The girls showed a special care for those children who didn't succeed, and they came to help quickly and easily, without any hesitation. In some exceptional cases, children asked teacher for help (6%), while demonstrating their full awareness of solving any situation of interaction with peers connected not only with physical assistance, but also with emotional support (Masalova, 2017).

7. Conclusion

The results obtained after the observations suggest that during preschool childhood there is a gradual increase in children's ability to focus on the partner of interaction independently and take into account his or her emotional state. The older preschool age is the age of the development of pro-social behavior. This is the time when children begin to take into account their partner of interaction without any special instructions from the adult.

However, by the end of preschool age, we observe a completely opposite tendency - a decrease in the children's desire to focus on a partner in terms of intervention and obvious pressure on their behavior that comes from adults.

In general, the results of this study showed that by the middle age children already had discovered the ability to support their peers, help and empathize, emotionally and even joyfully respond to their requests. Pre-schoolers tried to negotiate with their peers, explained to them how to behave, persistently and consistently making their peers understand the illegitimacy of some of their actions.

Taking into account the findings of our observation, we can admit that in order to achieve the effectiveness in the development of prosocial behavior in situations of interaction between children of preschool age, it is necessary for adults to help support the activity and children's efforts to help others using the methods of individually oriented support.

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